

**TESTIMONY OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
BEFORE THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
MARCH 16, 2009**

I appreciate the opportunity to support section 7 of House Bill 6666, An Act Concerning Teacher Certification.

Section 7 requires local boards of education to employ personnel certified by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board for services to children with autism when such services are required in the individual education plan. The proposal allows the Commissioner of Education to grant exceptions from this requirement if there are insufficient numbers of certified personnel available.

The original proposal has a July 1, 2011 effective date. I suggest that the committee revise this section to allow a 2 year period for individuals to become certified.

Further, I wish to emphasize that this proposal does not require all children with autism to receive behavioral services, although the statement of purpose seems to imply such intent. Rather, the proposal only requires that if services must be provided by a certified behavioral analyst -- if they are required.

Several months ago, my office met with parents who provided significant information regarding the Norwalk Board of Education's employment of an uncertified individual with no educational background in addressing issues specific to children with autism.

I am actively investigating their complaints in cooperation with the board of education, local police and the United States Department of Education. I hope to complete this investigation soon and determine the appropriate civil or criminal law enforcement course of action.

During my investigation, I learned that the local board of education has no certification or license system necessary to verify the credentials and skills of employees addressing the special behavioral needs of children with autism. These services are apparently the only special education professional discipline that does not require certification or licensure.

The Behavior Analyst Certification Board is a national, non-profit organization that provides education and certification services to those who work as behavior analysts. The states

of Florida, California, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Texas rely on the Board for their certification needs. Each year, more than 1,000 individuals are certified as behavior analysts.

Currently, there are 134 Board certified analysts in Connecticut, but many others live in the surrounding states and provide services to Connecticut children. Clearly, we lack sufficient certified analysts to fill the needs of students with autism. Imposing an effective date of July 1, 2011 would provide two years for individuals to meet that certification.

Certification should raise skill levels and provide credible assurance to boards of education.

I urge the committee's favorable consideration of section 7 of House Bill 6666.